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EXTENSION OF CULTIVABLE AREA

Cotton

2.25 Prior to 1956, Kerala was considered unsuitable for the cultivation of cotton. In that year an experiment was made on a pilot scale and the results were so encouraging that the area under Sea Island (long staple) cotton rose from 126 acres in 1956 to about 3,500 acres in 1959-60.

2.26 Sea Island cotton yields superior lint which can be spun into high count expensive yarn. The latter finds a good market within the country and at present has even got to be imported. The extension of area under this crop will help in saving valuable foreign exchange and it would also provide scope for development of such industries as ginning, baling, spinning and cotton seed oil extraction.

2.27 In view of the above factors it is desirable to undertake further extension of area under cotton. A part of this increase can take place at the expense of acreage under tapioca, which is a low yielding crop. About 0.2 to 0.3 million acres out of 0.56 million acres under tapioca can be diverted in this way during the next decade. Efforts should, however, be made to keep the output of tapioca at the existing level by raising its yield which is at a very low level.

2.28 There is also scope for diverting some highland area under single cropped paddy to Sea Island cotton since such a diversion would yield high returns in terms of value. The exact scope for such a diversion can, however, be ascertained only after the proposed land-use survey has been conducted.

2.29 Assuming 0.3 million acres are brought under Sea Island cotton, as suggested above, additional production of long staple cotton may be expected to reach a level of 192,000 bales by 1970-71.

Sugarcane

2.30 Sugarcane is a high value crop, and, therefore, is quite popular with the farmers. But it is one of those crops whose future extension of area is very much dependent upon the growth of sugar manufacturing industry. Its exact scope will, therefore, depend upon the growth of sugar factories.

2.31 The yield per acre of sugarcane in Kerala is very good (Kerala 40,000 lbs. per acre ; U.P. and Bihar 25,000 lbs. per acre ; all-India 28,000 lbs. per acre) and can be raised to 55,000 lbs. per acre. This factor favours the extension of sugarcane cultivation and the setting up of new sugar mills. At present there are about 25,000 acres under this crop in Thiruvella area, mostly concentrated around the Pampa river sugarcane factory. There is scope for a large increase in sugarcane acreage in the districts of Palghat, Trivandrum and Ernakulam which possess the requisite irrigation facilities. By 1971, the area under sugarcane may be doubled to about 50,000 acres.

Ginger

2.32 Ginger is a very high value yielding crop (Rs. 1,077 per acre). In view of good demand prospects for ginger in both internal and external markets, the production of